

Springfield, PA— Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) swapped stories with fellow veterans and delivered an address this morning at the Springfield American Legion post's Veterans Day Ceremony as part of his Veterans' Day weekend tour of the 7th Congressional District.

— "I will never regret one day of the 31 years I spent in the Navy, and it is always an honor to share my experiences with other veterans as well as to listen to their stories," said the Congressman. "Organizations like the Springfield American legion are vital to preserving the legacy of the men and women who have served our nation and ensuring that current soldiers receive the respect they deserve."

The American Legion was chartered by an act of Congress in 1919 and was founded to advocate for our nations' veterans. With nearly a quarter of a million members, Pennsylvania has the largest Department in the American Legion, which serves America's veterans, currently numbering 24 million.

The Congressman spoke to the American Legion about his work on behalf of veterans, which most recently includes his co-sponsorship of the Homes for Heroes Act. The bill, which passed earlier this month, will provide shelter for homeless veterans and their families and will help prevent low-income families from falling into homelessness. Specifically, this legislation establishes a supportive housing program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for low-income veterans by authorizing \$200 million in FY 2008 for an assistance program at HUD for supportive housing and services for low-income veterans.

"With 200,000 homeless Veterans in America on any given night, the Homes for Heroes Act is an essential step forward toward providing our veterans with the support they have earned," said the Congressman. "As a nation, we must recognize our duty to properly welcome back and provide for the men and women who have selflessly served in our defense."

The Congressman also supported the new GI bill, signed into law this year, which includes provisions to expand education benefits for veterans. The bill restores the promise of a full, four-year college education to any Veteran who has served for three years since September 11, 2001, paying for the most expensive public university in his or her state.

Additionally, the Congressman mentioned his support of the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Tax Relief (HEART) Act, which includes tax provisions intended to assist military personnel and their families, Veterans and public service volunteers. He also voted in support of—and included key provisions to-- and the House passed, H.R. 5658, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. This bill authorizes a pay raise of 3.9%, an increase of 0.5% above the budget request. This further reduces the gap in pay increases between the uniformed services and the private sector to 2.9%.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in

Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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